DOCUMENTARY

NEWS LETTER APRIL-MAY 1947 ONE SHILLING

IN THIS ISSUE: New Light On An Old Film by a Psychiatrist; Canadian Initiative by Isobel Jordan; Critics in Conflict; Non-Theatrical Distribution by a Technician; Notes of the Month; Film and Book Reviews; Correspondence

FILM STRIP IN MEDICINE

The possible development of the use of film strip in medicine has occupied the minds of responsible authorities for some considerable time. Research has shown that the assimilation of factual knowledge requires the use of numerous text books and references by teachers and students which makes study a lengthy and laborious affair.

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The final frames of the strip show how pictures are linked together to illustrate a subject—in this case the diagnostic procedures in relation to epigastric pain.

'Film Strip in Medicine' was used as a demonstration strip at a recent joint meeting of members of the Royal Society of Medicine and the Scientific Film Association. The Unicorn Head 'Flotation' strip was also shown to demonstrate the advantages of film strip for teaching.

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DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

Editorial Board: Edgar Anstey, Geoffrey Bell, Sinclair Road, John Taylor, Basil Wright

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INFORMATION—PLEASE

DURING World War II this country pursued a policy of public information and enlightenment which was based on a simple but fundamental thesis. This thesis was that people must have something worthwhile to fight *for*, not merely something to fight against. **The annus mirabilis of the war saw not only Alamein and Stalingrad, but also the Beveridge Report.**

The Labour Government today is facing the consequences of failing to take proper account of the importance of public information. The fuel crisis of February found the citizenry at large unprepared, uninformed and therefore bewildered if not resentful. Practically no one knew why there was no coal, or why, all of a sudden, the productive capacity of this country was being curtailed. This, mind you, after an intensive if superficial campaign to plug the 'Export or Die' story.

The Peace Effort

The plain fact is that speeches by Cabinet Ministers—in or out of the House of Commons—are nowhere near the answer to the specific problem. Just as in 1940-45, so today, people must have something to fight for, some future target of good living and the good life against which to weigh hardships and disillusionments which they are bound to suffer in the post-war world, whatever the complexion of the Government in power.

Knowledge is Strength

What is needed mainly is clear and sensible explanation. No pep-talks or exhortations can be really successful unless people understand present problems and the method by which they can be solved. As it is, the opposition rejoices in a field-day of negative bombardments and the replies of Ministers and Government spokesmen appear to be no more than a reciprocal barrage of doctrinaire tomatoes.

Yet our present Government has a cast-iron majority, and was presumably elected because people in this country believed that it alone could put into practice the very ideals on which the war was fought and won. **What people are not getting is a sense of understanding and a sense of leadership.** They could get some measure of this if the machinery of public information was giving an output similar to that which, for all its faults, it achieved during the war.

Films, radio, Press, lectures, exhibitions—geared to an overall plan, not of political propaganda, but of explanation, enlightenment and, above all, of informed discussion, could clear the lines within a few months. That the present Government realizes this in theory is obvious from the fact that the Central Office of Information exists (the Tories might well have dispensed with it), and from the fact that Francis Williams has his own set-up at 10 Downing Street. But the means of public enlightenment are not being used with skill or with vision. The people of this country are not being given the feeling of being in on a great experiment designed to bring a better life to them and to ordinary folk everywhere.

Information plus Enthusiasm

It is time that Mr. Attlee and his colleagues realized that the modern State cannot function without an informed and enthusiastic public any more than it can exist without the necessities of physical life. The two things are part and parcel of each other; and, despite other preoccupations, the Cabinet should, before it is too late, turn its attention to this essential need to inspire—the need to give that leadership which rests not just on a foolproof majority but on the active consent, goodwill, intelligence and effort of a united nation. Otherwise how can we, let alone the other United Nations, get anywhere?

LET US HAVE A PRODUCTION DRIVE IN PUBLIC INFORMATION—RIGHT AWAY.

NOTES OF THE MONTH

The cover picture on this issue is a production still from 'Instruments of the Orchestra' made by Crown Film Unit for the Ministry of Education. (Reviewed on page 88)

Carl Mayer

WE draw the attention of all our readers to the Carl Mayer Fund which is mentioned on the inside front cover of this issue. Mayer was, and still is, one of the great figures of world cinema. To us in this country, more particularly, it was not only his contribution to such films as *Caligari*, *New Year's Eve*, *The Last Laugh* and *Sunrise* which we remember with gratitude. Nearly all documentary workers owe him much, for he lived his last years in this country, and spent himself generously, indeed over-generously, in practical work and general advice on the making and shaping of the factual film. The proceeds of the Fund will be devoted to settling Mayer's estate and to erecting a suitable stone to him over his grave in Highgate Cemetery. An industry which pays scant tribute to its real pioneers has here an opportunity to express a lasting tribute to one, the most distinguished of them.

The British Film Institute

ELSEWHERE in this issue is an article which calls attention to defects in the reviewing and appraisal methods of the monthly Film Bulletin issued by the British Film Institute. This article is by no means the first we have published in criticism of the Institute's methods and policy during the past ten years. But we have every hope that it will be the last. We do not propose here to recapitulate what has appeared wrong, but rather to welcome (with any appropriate hatchet-burying which may be necessary) the recent announcements regarding the Institute's future. It would appear that under the new and able chairmanship of Patrick Gordon Walker the Institute is now to be given the scope and opportunity to become that alert, active and constructive body which we all hoped for on its inception and which all will agree is sorely needed today. It is understood that more adequate (though not yet perhaps sufficient) finance is being made available—the new grant is nearly double the old—and that an inquiry is to be held to determine the range of the Institute's activities in the future. Some of its present activities may be found to be redundant; for instance, much of its educational work which was begun at a time when the then Board of Education sniffed at films, may now well be transferred to the Ministry. Other of its work may now be expanded and enlarged. It is to be hoped that the reconstitution of the Institute will make it the focal point for all special activities in the world of film, that it will have a good-sized projection theatre, and that it will be housed in a building large enough and suitable enough for a policy of measured and confident expansion.

Ooh—mind my corns!

A CHAP we know was complaining the other day about how documentary was being oversold. He said every periodical and book he picked up was plugging it and the radio prattled of nothing else. Okay, but another chap we know went down to a west country debating society and found nearly a hundred people believing that a documentary was something which solicitors used to furnish their offices. It appears that a loud noise in Soho Square is heard only faintly at Land's End.

A Sad Loss

THE death of Leon Schauder in a Dakota crash at Croydon is a matter of distress to all concerned in the progress of documentary. Schauder first became known here before World War II when Gaumont British circulated his notable film *Nonquassi*. From then on his work in developing his personal techniques (he was a cameraman as well as a director), in presenting African problems in human terms was of great value, not least during the war period. It is a tragedy that he should have been killed just at the moment when he was embarking on new and ambitious projects which, had he lived, would we are sure, have established new channels of understanding between Africa and the rest of the world.

Comings and Goings

ALEX SHAW has resigned from the Crown Film Unit, and his place has been taken by John Taylor. All who know him will feel him to be a worthy successor to Shaw, who did a most admirable job at the Unit. Taylor is one of the veterans of documentary. He joined the EMB Unit at the age of sixteen, and worked on most of the major productions of documentary during the 'thirties, including a year with Flaherty on *Man of Arran*. For the past nine years he has been in sole charge of Realist Film Unit, and the high reputation of this Unit is largely due to his efforts and guidance. Taylor's place at Realist has been taken by Brian Smith, who has been responsible for a number of its most successful directorial jobs during the past few years.

The Films Act—Round Two

HAVING submitted their proposals for the new Films Act in January, the various trade bodies have now been called in by the Board of Trade for individual discussions. The producers, backed by the unions, favour legislation that will assist the rising standard and quality of British production and eliminate the cheap and nasty. On this very issue the old battle with the renting and exhibiting side of the industry is, however, rejoined.

To give the cinema public a better balanced and more entertaining programme of films means today improving what is commonly called the 'supporting programme'. This in turn means giving the producers of documentary, cartoon and other specialized films greater access to screen space and better renting conditions. The key question this raises is whether the exhibitor and the renter are wise, let alone justified, if they put the short-term considerations of the increased expense this will involve them in, before the long-term prospects of a live and developing British industry and better cinema entertainment. The way in which discussions at the Board of Trade appear to have developed so far is not encouraging on this point.

Readers will notice that this issue of 'Documentary News Letter' has been called April-May instead of March-April. The cause was the intervention of the Fuel Crisis. The power cut disrupted the activities of the printer and 'D.N.L.' had to take its place in the going-to-press queue. Next issue will be June-July and, fuel crisis willing, will appear early in June.

SPONSORSHIP

—or Films Don't Grow on Trees

THE vast majority of British documentary films are made at the expense of Government Departments or industrial undertakings. In short they are sponsored. Long-established sponsors like the Shell Oil Group, the Gas Industry and M.O.I. (now C.O.I.) have recently been joined by local government bodies and certain trade unions, but such desirable developments do not affect the basic fact that documentary production is unable to stand on its own financial feet and to recover from distribution revenue sufficient money to meet production cost.

It is easy to exaggerate the disadvantages of sponsorship. Most documentary films made today are not suitable for production on a non-sponsored or 'voluntary' basis. They form a legitimate part of the public relations or educational policy of some industrial, governmental, or 'social-purposed' organization. Their *primary* object is not entertainment, and the audience whose needs they are designed to serve, is not so constituted as to afford a financial return.

Let us, however, consider the position of any short documentary production which is intended primarily to entertain cinema audiences in terms which are not the concern of any available sponsor. Prior to 1939 the cost of such a film is likely to have been in the region of £1,500 per ten-minute reel; today the equivalent figure, due to increase in labour and material costs, is more likely to be £3,000. And the producer has still to face the basic problem of securing theatrical distribution. If he is fortunate enough to do so he may hope for a return, after deduction of distribution costs, of something in the region of £250 a reel—one-tenth of his production cost.

Too much emphasis cannot be placed on this disparity. It lies at the root of all current documentary policy. The short film (and often the second feature) is regarded by cinema exhibitor and distributor alike as mere fill-up material to be obtained at nominal cost. The original cause of the trouble was the virtual giving away of American supporting material, dance-band shorts and so on, by American distributors. This material had perhaps already earned its production cost in America, and could in this country be thrown in as a make-weight to help salesmen dispose of an expensive feature. The result has been that British shorts and second features produced to compete in this market have had to be made for a few hundred pounds a reel, and, as a consequence, have almost invariably been so lacking in quality that a fully civilized community would scarcely have permitted their exhibition. Yet only a product so cheap and inadequate could hope to recover its production costs.

It should perhaps be mentioned in passing that many of the makers of these films, content to cling to their precarious livelihood on a virtually unprofessional level of operation, have not hesitated to attack the competitive distribution of high quality sponsored films, on the grounds that the cinema is being used for commercial advertising! We need not probe further into this odd concern for the common weal which sees the public good served by some monstrous collection of badly photographed scenic views, strung together at the maximum possible length and condemns *Target for Tonight*, *Song of Ceylon* and *World of Plenty* as 'advertising'. It is obvious to anyone not blinded by his own commercial interests that public needs must come first and that if, in present economic circumstances, these are better served by the sponsorship method, then the source of the production, finance, becomes a secondary consideration.

Yet the fact remains that great difficulty attends the theatrical distribution of high-class documentary films whether sponsored or otherwise. It is this which accounts for the high hopes attaching to the recommendations now under consideration for the revision of the Quota Act which in its present form shortly expires. Previous versions of the Act have done little for the documentary and short film producer, but the hope is that the Board of Trade will see fit to introduce clauses which will ensure not only that American short and second feature footage is balanced by a high ratio of British made films in the same categories, but that eligibility to rank as quota shall be contingent on a reasonably high level of production expenditure. In brief the Act must contain a minimum cost clause for such films. Documentary and specialized film-makers through their appropriate organizations and with the support of many other powerful sections of the industry are pressing for legislation to this end, and it is very much to be hoped that what is generally admitted to have been Britain's outstanding contribution to world cinema will shortly be available on British screens. For the cynic might well argue that the documentary film has two main characteristics—high quality coupled with rare visibility!

But whatever the nature of new legislation, we must not lose sight of the fact that if the production of documentary films were to be put on an economic basis in the normal commercial sense, the need and justification for sponsorship would by no means have passed. This is not simply because films to be used for purposes other than entertainment are likely always to require subsidy (notably in the field of education) but that even films intended for theatrical distribution may appropriately express the point of view of some group in the community, and that sponsorship finance may properly be made available for the purpose. The film is perhaps the outstanding instrument of group expression and *provided entertainment standards are reached*, the screen may well be used for public relations by local governments, trade unions, public utilities, or the Government itself. This practice is in line with modern democratic practice which requires that every community group which renders a public service should play its appropriate part in public enlightenment.

Indeed, there is much to be said for the view that ideas of social value are more likely to originate from community groups operating outside the cinema than as the result of the individual inspirations of a film-maker—especially in view of the fact that the individual film producer or film director is almost always answerable to a financial group which may have no roots in the public service. For all films are 'sponsored' in the sense that they must somehow acquire finance in advance of production, finance which will not come back from the box-office for months or even years. And the source of such finance may well exert a direct or indirect influence on the nature of the product. The idea of overcoming this difficulty by setting up a State-controlled finance corporation or film bank for the provision of initial production capital and any other similar steps in the general direction of the nationalization of the industry do not completely dispose of this criticism unless important safeguards are provided. For a film bank can hardly be quite free from an awareness of what is in the interests of the existing structure of the State. And if we are not to fall into the current errors of totalitarianism we must be careful to watch that in escaping from the present financial stranglehold we do not fall into another which may be equally oblivious of the claims for self-expression of minority groups.

The answer is, of course, that the only safe sponsor of documentary films is the public itself acting through its commercial and professional groups. Fair marketing conditions will, in effect, enable the cinema-goer to act as an indirect sponsor but there will still remain many films which derive from the need for self-expression of the public in roles other than that of cinema-going. The doctors will want to have their say; the postmen through their trade union perhaps, the women's guilds, the local government officers, all may wish to reach their fellow-citizens through the screen. Their power to do so should be limited only by their ability to hold the interest of an audience.

ODD MAN OUT —CRITICS IN CONFLICT

Members of the 'D.N.L.' Board normally contribute anonymously, but when 'ODD MAN OUT' proves to be BASIL WRIGHT'S meat and EDGAR ANSTEY'S poison the Editorial 'We' is split

'A MASTERPIECE'— WRIGHT

Before going on record as saying that a film is a work of art, and a fine one, a cautious look-around is essential. In an industry where raspberries are reckoned in superlatives the critical eyes and ears are in danger of being clouded and bemused. Anything which rises above the level of mediocrity gives one a kick, and often one is liable to overpraise.

Odd Man Out, however, has that something extra the others haven't got. Exercise your critical judgment as vigorously as you like, this film does what no other British feature film has ever achieved. It rings the aesthetic bell with as loud a clang as do acknowledged masterworks like *Greed* and *Kameradschaft*—to take two widely-spaced examples.

Sense of shape, sense of drama—yes, including the unities. Command of technique so skilled and precise that it seems hardly possible. Impeccable direction of impeccable actors. Absolute certainty of purpose. These qualities director Carol Reed, whom we hereby salute with three times three, possesses in full measure.

But it is in the richness of conception of the story he has chosen to tell that Reed is streets ahead of all but a few contemporary directors. He certainly ranks with John Ford at his best.

Like Ford, Reed has not depended on an original screen story. Indeed he challenges direct comparison with Ford. *Odd Man Out*, like *The Informer*, is based on an Irish novel. But, again like Ford, Reed seems to have been helped, rather than hindered by developing his work from the novel-form. The transmutation is completely successful. The novel, as it were, no longer exists, but has been changed to something new—something perhaps better. Incidentally, F. L. Green, the author of the book, worked on the script with R. C. Sherriff.

Anyhow, *Odd Man Out* is that rarest of things—a film about human feelings and thoughts and motives, all of which are real and recognizable, and touched with true pity and terror. It would have been so easy to make nothing more than a cracking good thriller out of this story of a hunted, wounded fugitive from justice who evades capture for eight hours in the city of Belfast. But *Odd Man Out* is in no sense a thriller. On the contrary, Reed has devoted himself, with an integrity and intensity unique to the real artist, to probing deeply into the human heart. In a film surging with characters (literally hundreds, some only glimpsed for a second, but remembered longer), he depicts the diverse reactions of all sorts and conditions of people to the hunted Johnny.

Johnny has—not deliberately—shot an innocent man during a robbery. Johnny is badly wounded. Organized society is mobilized to hunt him down. But Johnny is also a leader of a political party—of the underground, as it were. The robbery was planned to obtain funds, not for gain. So all the people who come up against the fugitive, and all those who are seeking him, whether as enemies or friends, have secret thoughts, secret motivations—and their secrets are made plain by their words and actions, or in their faces.

To all this Reed adds a lovely fresco of children—pathetic in the true sense of the word. Slum children, *bourgeois* children (the little boys at the snowy window for instance), all of them weaving in and out of the sombre story rather like the child characters of Dostoievski. The little girl with one roller skate is in my opinion one of the loveliest images in movie since the dancing peasant in Dovshenko's *Earth*.

Again, this is one of those rare films which makes a genuinely creative use of sound. Technically it is one of the finest tracks I have ever heard. Imaginatively, it uses all the sounds of a big city, sometimes for emphasis, sometimes in counterpoint. There is a sequence where Johnny's girl, seeking to throw off a plain-clothes man, goes through a dance hall full of jitterbugging people. The band reiterates, fortissimo, a brief, inane, ugly phrase. She emerges. The plain-clothes man is still with her. She walks down a street to the priest's house. The plain-clothes man is still with her. And with us too is the repetitive, grinding echo of the dance band which never ceases till the priest's door closes behind her. Then there is the barking dog and the alarum bells as Johnny, deserted by his pals, starts off on the run. And throughout a delicacy of dialogue in undertones and whispers—better, or at any rate, as well done as in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Linking all is William Alwyn's music—a fine score which is clearly designed to be an integral part of the whole sound pattern.

But above all it is people one remembers. Not types, people. We can understand them because they are real and ordinary—or, if, as with the raving drunken artist, they are extraordinary, we find in them the fantasia of our own sub-conscious.

With *Odd Man Out* British cinema has at last come of age. In Carol Reed we have, in my opinion, one of the finest artists the screen has produced in any country.

The film must have cost the earth. Unlike some other British productions, it is worth twice what it cost, whatever the price. For you cannot set a price to a work of art.

'A JEREMIAD'—ANSTEY

Now I hope I am not one to use the critical sledge-hammer to crack a nut, nor are my visits to the cinema devoted exclusively to the pursuit of social significance; but I cannot escape the conclusion that *Odd Man Out* is a shocking film. Not so much in content or in manner as in the fact that it has been made at all. And then again less shocking in its making than in the eulogies with which it has been received. For more than one critic has acclaimed it as Britain's greatest film of all time; and this means greater than *Love on the Dole*, *Song of Ceylon*, *In which We Serve*, and *Brief Encounter*.

Cast your mind back to Germany after the last war. In those days the morbid screen drama of the helpless individual struggling against malignant circumstances was high art. The incessant rain, the dark vice-ridden cities (*The Street*, *The Joyless Street*) provided a setting for the tortures of sensitive souls hopelessly damned by man-made civilization. The action moved from sordid bedroom to disreputable café to brothel. And through it all loomed the agonized face of suffering Man.

It took us a few years to realize that we were seeing in these technically admirable pictures a symptom of post-war defeatism. They represented the individual in escape from the hard facts of European life. Man had destroyed his own world and here was an attempt to scrape aesthetic satisfaction from the destruction. It was the hey-day of *schadenfreude*, of happiness wrung from bitterness. A few years later still we saw that this comparatively harmless use of the film carried grave dangers. One had always been aware of the adolescent satisfactions to be got from luxuriating in the sense of defeat of those woe-begone productions (at twenty I still enjoyed every moment of them). But later it became clear that the mood which they represented, and indeed fostered, provided an ideal spring-board for coming totalitarian theories. The individual was defeated: what could be more enjoyable than for him to lose his individuality in some great, dark, authoritarian force?

Is it unfair to consider *Odd Man Out* against this historical background and to find a parallel? It can scarcely be denied that at a time when the country is exhausted by war the film wallows in the hopeless plight of almost all its characters. Although the purpose of the revolutionary raid with which the film opens is to seize urgently needed money for the 'Organization' and, although a large sum of money is in fact stolen, the film carefully ignores the positive achievement, makes no reference to what is done with the money and concentrates its attention instead on the fact that the hero has lost faith in what he set out to do. The plot is careful to permit him no satisfaction, psychological or physical, of even the most minor order. The fact that his girl dies with him does not abate his tortured grimaces,

nor does the girl find any noticeable fulfilment. The 'Organization' is left in despair, most of the characters expose their smallness of spirit (it is not without significance that only the priest comes across as a character complete in himself) and the rain gives place to snow. Nor can the film claim the diplomatic immunity of High Tragedy. The incompleteness of the supporting characters destroys hope of that. No true tragic issue is allowed to mature. At the best it is Hamlet with no one but the Prince.

I am here less concerned with detail than with the over-all conception of the film, but the fact must be faced that the rather alarming sympathy which most critics have felt with the mood of this picture, has blinded them to an exasperating unevenness. There is some extraordinarily poor acting (notably from the policemen) and levels of characterization and accents of speech are so variegated that we have no consistent atmosphere of Belfast or any other real place. The sequence with the mad painter and the disreputable doctor (a half-character this, if ever there was one) belongs in another film—or perhaps constitutes another short film in itself. For suddenly at this point all attempt at realism goes by the board and we have a stylized setting which might almost have come from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. And why has there been no reference (in any review I have read) to patches of dialogue couched in the embarrassing terms of cheap sentimental melodrama? Mr. Mason does all that is asked of him and my expectations were keenly aroused by his early appearances as the rebel leader. There were signs here of humour and depth of feeling. But once he is wounded he has to become a vague, inhuman religious symbol and the brief flicker of healthy vitality which he had given to the film dies out. Indeed I maintain that there is only one thing in this devitalized film deserving the adjective 'great' and that is Alwyn's musical score.

To sum up. The idea that *Odd Man Out* can be regarded as a sort of Hymn to Charity is so much mumbo-jumbo concealing the real truth that it is an 'escape' film in the profoundest sense. In itself that is not important. But let us watch carefully to see that in periods of cold, discouraging weather we do not too readily accept the view that the defeat of all humanity's aspirations is not only inevitable but aesthetically admirable. If we are to have here in post-war Britain our own particular brand of Jean-Paul Sartre's Existentialism, let us at any rate recognize it for what it is.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE MOVIES?

WE readily assume that the film occupies a large part of daily life. Evidence obtrudes on all sides: miles of queues, acres of posters, the fan magazines on the bookstalls with their tittle-tattle of the stars, and the daily conversations of millions. But until comparatively recently little of this evidence has been collected and examined with real sociological intent.

Because cinema-going is heaviest in the English speaking countries, it is appropriate that the sociological study of the film should have originated in the U.S.A., and been developed more recently in this country. Faber & Faber are to be congratulated on their new series of film studies on this subject which started with Margaret Thorp's *America at the Movies*. This book, first published in the U.S.A. in 1939, is one of the best of its kind. Brimming over with facts which must have cost a great deal of effort to collect, it is well written and extremely entertaining. It sets out to follow the sociological ramifications of the film in America, primarily at the level of its influence on dress, behaviour and personal habits and opinions. It presents an astonishing variety of information which is ready to hand about the incredible doings of film-fans on the one hand and the Hollywood film companies on the other, about film morality, the Hays Code and the lobbyings of sectional interests of the American public eager to thrust their idea of what is right and proper on the rest of the world. Since Hollywood films still occupy two-thirds of the world's screen-time, much of this is of immediate relevance to us all. Most revealing is the picture given of the star-cult. There are straight commercial aspects such as the fact that the sale of skates in America went up 150 per cent when Sonja Henje, the skater, became box-office, or the advertising of this star's hair-style, or that star's way of dressing and of such things as 'Judy Garland dresses that will give any young Miss the "swing and smartness" of this famous M.G.M. star'. Then there's the evidence of how millions of Americans dress, eat, decorate their rooms *à la* Bette Davis or Clark Gable. How millions more solemnly lap up the emotional wash prepared by the fan magazines. 'Gary Cooper is so darned humble and honest about himself he still to this day doesn't believe he has a thing any other guy hasn't', and similar touches of common or uncommon humanity. The best thing about the book is this evidence which it provides of how films and in particular the stars in them have given a badly needed focus to the hopes, desires and ideals of at least one continent of emotionally starved humanity. At the same time one should remember that there is another side to this influence. If a film can raise the standards of dress and make-up and send people to the public libraries to read the books on which various films are based, the achievement is a positive one.

J. P. Mayer's *Sociology of Film* goes a step beyond the superficial effects of the film on the outward forms of behaviour and attempts to find out a little more about the mass-psychological influences at work. He is not content to collect existing evidence. His book is made up for the most part of specially prepared documents detailing the individual reactions of a selected number of children, adolescents and adults to films. The work originated in the first place from an inquiry which Mr. Mayer undertook in 1944-5 on behalf of the Rank Organization into Children's Cinema Clubs. The result is however, disappointing. Despite the author's excuses in the introduction, the book is unnecessarily heavy and undigested. The opening chapters expound the theory of the film as a popular art with copious side references to the Elizabethan and Greek theatre. But is it really necessary to parade such an array of learning to convince us? When the author at one point quotes Tacitus and insists that 'we could fill many pages, if not a whole book with similar quotations from Cicero, Livius, Plutarch, Polybius, and many other Roman classics' one's instinct is to duck and rush wildly for cover. Quotation of this kind is also adduced in support of the contention that the cinema is the modern version of the 'bread and circuses' phase in a society's development. Then follow a collection of essays by a class of schoolgirls, replies to a questionnaire put out by the *Picturegoer* and various other reactions obtained from working-class children. A certain amount of this material is of undoubted psychological interest. It also makes one wonder how literate people really are in this country. But as a method of trying to represent a mass phenomenon it is of questionable value. The documents are not sufficiently representative of the various classes, occupations, age-groups, etc., for any findings to be at all valid as a sample survey. On the other hand they are not prepared in a sufficiently imaginative or interesting way to pass as individual social documents in the sense that Pilot Papers, for example, or even certain documentary films, try to present a mass problem in the light of one individual example. It is difficult therefore to see how Mr. Mayer can justifiably go on to draw conclusions from his evidence and propound various remedies such as State censorship, State distribution of films, etc. These may well be the correct solutions, but we do not need to read through 200 or more pages of unrepresentative reactions, to agree with him.

Despite these limitations in the methods he has chosen to use, Mr. Mayer is nevertheless doing useful work if he can succeed with this book and with the second volume which is promised, in drawing attention to the need for developing the sociological study of the film. At the same time there is another line of approach which has not been tried to any great extent. Elsewhere in this issue there is a study of the French film, *La Grande Illusion*, by a Dutch psychiatrist. He approaches the problem of the film's mass psychological effect via an analysis of the film itself. He attempts to show how a film which ostensibly sets out to create new social attitudes, in this case anti-war feelings, in fact falls a victim to the old attitudes against which it tries to evoke resistance. In certain respects, *La Grande Illusion*, is an exceptional case. Few films can equal it artistically and few set out so obviously with positive social intentions. Nevertheless, it is true that the majority, if not all, films do have quite concrete social relations of this kind. In themselves and in the people, situations, or things that they depict, they are at all times either confirming or rejecting current social values and attitudes whether they set out to do so consciously or not. And it is of considerable importance to realize that we are being 'got at' in a social and political sense, in moments when we are most relaxed and unsuspecting.

Through the analysis of actual films, through the investigation of individual reactions and through the collection of the more easily accessible facts which Margaret Thorp has drawn attention to, it should slowly be possible to build up a rather more coherent picture of what all this cinema-going is about. And do not let us underestimate the importance of work of this kind. It is not only essential to our understanding of the business of making and showing films; it is also intimately bound up with many of the problems of present-day society.

America at the Movies by Margaret Thorp. (*Faber and Faber*. 12*s*. 6*d*.)
Sociology of Film by J. P. Mayer. (*Faber and Faber*. 15*s*.)

CANADIAN INITIATIVE

ISOBEL JORDAN writes of an important first step towards the international co-ordination of the class-room film

THE production of educational films to meet the school curriculum has always suffered from the severe economic handicap of unco-ordinated curricula in different areas of the English-speaking world. To obtain a common denominator, certain agencies in the United States, Canada and Great Britain have recently begun to conduct negotiations. Mr. W. R. Speight, a member of the Audio-Visual Aids Committee of the British Ministry of Education, paid a two months' visit to the National Film Board of Canada and brought back a selection of Canadian films to be adapted for use in British schools. Among the films chosen were *Canadian Landscape*, a film showing the Canadian artist A. Y. Jackson at work; *Salmon Run*, a film describing the migration of salmon in the Fraser River; *Life on the Western Marshes*, the story of how bird life is protected on the prairies; and *Great Lakes*, a film about shipping on Canada's inland water-way.

British Films Used

In reciprocation, the Canadian Film Board has undertaken to distribute certain British films in Canadian schools. Two such films at present being shown to schools by the Board's mobile units are *Man: One Family* and *Your Children's Eyes*.

Meanwhile, one of the leading U.S. 16 mm. distributors is conducting negotiations for the adaptation to the U.S. curriculum of a series of school films produced by the educational unit of the National Film Board. The films will be made with the documentary rather than the textbook objective in mind; they will not attempt to give a visual exposition of a particular lesson in science, geography, mathematics or other topic of a set curriculum, but will strive to acquaint the child with aspects of life related to his own experience in his community, his country and his world.

The first group of films, the Junior Community Series, for example, has been designed for primary grades. It will show the child what part is played in his life by such familiar figures in the community as the postman and the policeman, and will describe how such everyday services as water and electricity are brought to the child's home.

Local Variations

There are several reasons why the National Film Board of Canada decided to produce school films of this broader kind. The first is the fact that the Board is an agency of the Federal Government, while education in Canada, as in the United States, is largely under the jurisdiction of the regional authorities. It has therefore been found uneconomic to produce films dealing with specific topics of a particular curriculum so long as local and regional variations in the curriculum make such co-ordination impractical.

Documentaries for Children

The actual pattern of these films has been based upon the Board's wartime experience in conducting film showings in schools. While the Board did not make films specifically for school-children during this period, being chiefly concerned with producing material for adult showings to rural and urban audiences; it did show its programmes in rural schools. These programmes included documentaries like *Salmon Run*, *Great Lakes* and *Life on the Western Marshes*. It was found that if these documentaries were presented after the teacher had been supplied with background material, lesson guides and class-room questions, they were not only readily adaptable for direct teaching purposes, but capable of stimulating the children to engage in discussions and to embark on projects related to the themes of the films.

Visual Units

Now that the Canadian Film Board has undertaken the production of school films, it is adapting this lesson to the production of a complete visual teaching unit made up of a film, filmstrip, wall sheet and teacher's manual. In one of these units, dealing with the function of the postman in the community, for instance, the film describes the work of the postman and the post office through a meeting between a little boy, Bobby, and the postman who brings a letter to his home. The filmstrip gives an account of stamp collecting and touches upon the geography of countries from which stamps come. A silent segment is included showing Bobby writing a letter. His mother shows him how to address and mail it properly. The wall sheet depicts the people who speed the mail to its destination, the sorters and dispatchers in the post office, the rural mail carrier, the engineers on the trains and the pilots who fly the planes. A second wall sheet describes the correct way to address and stamp envelopes and parcels. The teacher's manual provides a lesson guide and discussion questions.

Advisory Committee

In order to ensure that the films produced will be of proper pedagogical standards, the Board has enlisted the support of the Canadian Educational Association, a body reflecting the interests of education in each of the provinces. The C.E.A. has set up a Film Advisory Committee composed of teachers, Directors of Visual Education in the provinces and members of the National Film Board. The Canadian Teachers' Federation and Provincial Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Education have also been consulted.

Policy

The educational production unit in charge of the series has drawn up its editorial policy which reads in part as follows:

'The curriculum is not our doctrine. We accept its facts but remain free to interpret it with the freedom allowed to all teachers. In approaching each subject we will remember human needs, human ambitions and human achievements in that order. We will place our camera on the inside of every subject and look outward with its people. Our thinking will be in terms of people; the family unit in relation to the larger community.'

Guidance for Film-makers

The Film Advisory Committee laid down a few guiding rules for technical treatment which may be summarized thus:

(1) Technical treatment should be simple since a child is bewildered by fade-outs and similar photographic devices.

(2) There must be continuity in the story as a child tends to remember things in the order in which he sees them. Flash-backs are to be avoided as confusing.

(3) Scenes must not be too short nor follow one another too quickly—the tempo must be slow.

(4) Major characters in films should be children as a child is interested in other boys and girls of his own age.

(5) Commentary should be used sparingly at points where it is essential; the visuals should tell the story.

(6) The musical score and sound effects should be kept to a functional minimum.

(7) Each film should contain a recapitulation at the end.

Appraisal by Teachers

The second task of the Film Advisory Committee has been the preparation of film evaluation sheets for use with each film which will be screened by an evaluating panel of teachers. These sheets will ask for a grading of each film indicating its suitability for primary, elementary, intermediate or senior high school; they will request an opinion of the sound and photography, and seek comments as to the film's teaching value. The sheets will also contain a synopsis of the film, its curricular classification, the name of producer and distributor, and the date of production, a description stating whether it is black and white or colour, sound or silent, and a statement of the length and price.

Tie-ups

In conjunction with this project, the educational unit of the Board has undertaken to correlate its own films as well as British, American and other foreign films in its possession with the curricula of each of the nine provinces. The British film *Your Children's Eyes*, for instance, is being classified thus: suitable for Grades VIII and X in Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island, and for Grade IX in Ontario.

Master Catalogue

In addition to this classification scheme, the Educational Division of the Distribution Department of the Board is preparing a master catalogue of all the school films, from Government, private and international sources that are available in each of the nine Provincial Department of Education libraries. Provincial Directors of Audio-Visual Education have been asked to forward copies of their catalogues with the films suitable for teaching that have been in frequent demand appropriately marked and graded. These film titles will be catalogued alphabetically with producer, length, grading and price indicated together with a listing of the provincial libraries where they may be obtained. When completed, this catalogue will have classified all the backlog of school films in Canada, and will be the first project co-ordinating the work of all Canadian provinces in any field in the sphere of education.

If work of this sort can be adapted to a still larger area, the plan of an international school film exchange may well become a feasible project.

NEW LIGHT ON AN OLD FILM

A Psychiatrist analyses *La Grande Illusion*

[*This abridged study by C. van Emde Boas, a leading Dutch psychiatrist, was first published in 'Freie Katheder', a Dutch literary periodical last year. It is one of several sociological studies which he has made of selected films.*]

La Grande Illusion is accepted as one of the most perfect productions of pre-war French film-making. It is also a film with a purpose, preaching the fraternization of peoples with such fervour that it is frequently considered unsuitable for public performance. What I am concerned with here is not its artistic quality, but whether it is really an anti-war picture and whether its effect on the average cinema-goer is such as the propaganda pretends it to be. Although my own initial reaction on seeing it was one of deep emotion, I cannot help on reflection considering it politically a complete failure. Despite its artistic qualities and its superficially humanistic intentions, it has, I feel, a strong reactionary undercurrent.

To assist readers who did not see or do not remember the picture a short summary of its contents will be necessary.

The Story

In the war of 1914-1918 a French plane flown by Lieutenant Marechal and Capt. de Boieldieu is shot down by the famous German fighter-pilot, Cavalry Captain von Rauffenstein. The German, the prototype of the well-educated aristocrat of the old school who knows how to behave towards his defeated adversary, welcomes the prisoners most courteously and offers them, according to the rules of the game, an excellent lunch in the officers' mess. The Count de Boieldieu, in particular, who is his social equal, is treated with all the consideration he could ask for. The French are then brought to a prison camp and soon they begin to dig an escape tunnel from the dormitory to the open field. We see life in the prison camp, the Prussian officers and the jovial militiamen, all portrayed in the sympathetic light of an ennobling humanism, of the relationship of 'man to man'. The old guards are mild and human, full of understanding for the prisoners. Then comes the disappointing transfer of the prisoners on the day the tunnel was to have been used. By chance the principal figures meet again in an old castle in the mountains, specially arranged as a camp for prisoners who have tried to escape. Von Rauffenstein is the commander, a job he loathes, as he admits to Boieldieu, but which enables him after all to serve his country. Again an escape is planned, this time it goes off successfully, due to the self-sacrifice of Boieldieu. He succeeds in distracting the attention of the castle garrison by playing the flute on the highest tower of the castle, but has to pay for it with a bullet in his stomach from the revolver of the commander who shoots him 'with a bleeding heart', 'doing his duty', when Boieldieu refuses to come down. Marechal escapes with Lieutenant Rosenthal, the son of a rich Jewish banker, and both try to reach Switzerland. They find shelter in a farm near the frontier where a young peasant woman has been left alone with a little girl. All the men are gone, killed. There is a wonderful when she points to the portraits: 'Liége, Tannenberg, our greatest victories.' Again the film demonstrates how important the relationship is between human beings: the German farmer's wife and the French pilot fall in love and the German child is cared for by the enemies of its country. But when Rosenthal's foot which has been injured is healed, the escape proceeds. Marechal promises to come back after the war to fetch Elsa and then they vanish into the night to reach Switzerland safely.

Conscious Motive

From this short summary it should be clear even to those who have not seen the picture, that what we might call the conscious, or the higher motive of the film is a pre-eminently ethical and humanistic one which moves us deeply and cannot be overlooked by a single spectator. The act of fraternization remains the leading theme throughout the whole film. When von Rauffenstein asks the captured staff officer whether he is related to the military attaché in Berlin and they start talking about Mlle Fifi at Maxim's and about Oxford, the individuals are at once set free from the group (i.e. German or French in this case) which kills every tender feeling. They have achieved a common human basis on which a new relationship is possible. And that same motive comes in repeatedly: whether it is the sympathy shown by the German guard for the French lieutenant who goes crazy in solitary confinement, or the attachment of the French farmer's son to the farm and the way he speaks to a German cow as if it were a human being. The fact that love overcomes all national antagonisms, that the charm of a little girl and the magic of the Holy Crib bridge all differences of language, all this enables us to accept a picture, so 'human' in the best sense of the word, as a whole. '*On n'apprend que de celui qu'on aime*!'

The Dangers

But this is just the thing which makes this film so terribly dangerous. Right next to these anti-war passages, but much less visible and more dispersed throughout the whole story, we find elements which may easily reconcile us to the idea of war unless we can succeed in dissociating them from their deceptive cover of honour, chivalry, patriotism and duty. The pathos of the scene of the defeated French pilot being lunched in the German officers' mess and the chivalrous idea of the wreath dropped by the German squadron leader in honour of his dead French adversary, are perhaps the least dangerous. Any cinema-goer can see through this false show as long as he remembers Rotterdam, Warsaw and London. After the murderous air battles above Berlin and the atomic bomb on Nagasaki aerial warfare has ceased to be a tournament for modern knights *à la* von Rauffenstein. But Renoir himself could not possibly think of that in 1938 and therefore it should be considered his special merit that he even then attached this element of empty war romance exclusively to an effete aristocracy. Much less transparent is the effect of the outburst of patriotism introduced quite naturally when the Fort Douamont near Verdun changes hands several times. It is only on careful reflection that one realizes that the glamorous and stirring tune of the Marseillaise, gripping not only the French on the screen but even the spectator in the cinema, is one of the refined means by which more 'kriegsbereitschaft' is let loose on the spectator than all the other anti-war tendencies in the rest of the picture, can keep in check. Even less apparent and less intense, but more permanent and uninhibited by any contradictory feeling, the pro-war tendency works via our inevitable sympathy with the prisoners and their repeated and finally successful attempts to escape.

'La Patrie'

The effect of a film as well as of a drama is based upon our identification with the persons on the screen or on the stage. The anti-war tendency, preached openly and quite honestly by Renoir, is, however, entirely undermined by this identification. For, why do these men try to escape? Why do they repeat their efforts in spite of solitary confinement, transfers, and all sorts of drawbacks and dangers, with an obstinacy and a courage deserving a better cause? Because they are fed up with the war and military rigmarole? Because they are longing for the peace and comfort of Switzerland, the neutral modern Canaan? Not at all! All these grown-up men are moved only by a single idea, a single ideal which is not called 'home' or 'wife' or 'work' and 'child' but 'La patrie'. Rosenthal, the 'sale juif' expresses it when he says towards the end of the film that he is going back to his guns and Marechal to his flying. For here lies the greatest weakness of the film—or, from the point of view of the ruling ideology its greatest strength: war is portrayed throughout this whole anti-war picture in a very special way. We feel its threats, we undergo its force as an evil working from a great distance, a tragically inevitable fate coming over mankind. Everybody mourns for it, everybody suffers but no one is guilty. Outside death rages mercilessly, but nobody is responsible for it.

All the facts we heard after 1918 about profiteering, imperialistic cliques, trusts, international cartel arrangements and so on, are entirely forgotten in the intoxication of nationalistic feelings.

Beneath the Surface

In short, under the cover of fraternization and a humanistic ethic the fatal inclination to look upon war as something inevitable visited by higher powers upon a guiltless world, is activated by this film. In this way it unwittingly strengthens the passive attitude of men and women towards this human evil and stifles the inclination to resist which it pretends to call up. If this picture is shown today in a special performance as frequently happens, it should be introduced and explained and not only praised for its artistic values. We should always ask, not only what is the artistic quality of the art presented to us but also what is its effect upon us and in which direction does it pull us. We should learn to look below the surface and to understand why a Renoir could not help himself; unless we want to become the victims of the very things we are pretending to fight against.

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Instruments of the Orchestra. Crown for Ministry of Education. *Producer:* Alexander Shaw. *Director:* Muir Mathieson. *Photography:* F. Gamage. *Music:* Benjamin Britten: played by the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Dr. Malcolm Sargent. *Distribution:* M.G.M. (Theatrical) and C.F.I. (Non-theatrical). 21 mins.

There has been much controversy about this film which belongs to the Ministry of Education's experimental series of visual units. *Instruments of the Orchestra* sets out to explain to children the various instruments, the contribution each makes to the ensemble, and the way in which the various sounds created are integrated into one harmonious whole by the composer and conductor. Crown Film Unit has enlisted for this purpose the aid of Benjamin Britten, Malcolm Sargent and the London Symphony Orchestra, on the very proper assumption that only the best is good enough for children.

Some people have quibbled about the expensiveness of this production and have claimed that as much, or more, could have been taught for half the cost. It is true that this production has a certain luxurious pace about it and that is far removed from many of the over-earnest and unimaginative classroom efforts we have seen. It is equally true that other means might have been used. For example, we might have had a solemn film in which each instrument was much more painstakingly explained and illustrated, after which one might feel certain that no reasonably intelligent child could possibly confuse a piccolo with an oboe. Nobody would claim such results for *Instruments of the Orchestra*.

Does that mean that this film is a failure—or that perhaps it had a larger purpose? It must be assumed that the other media in the visual unit will stress the individual characteristics of the instruments and perhaps show something of the technique of scoring. The sound film, which is the highspot of the visual unit, should integrate this knowledge and consolidate it in the mind of the child by the combined impact of aural and visual illustration. (Care must be taken, however, to ensure that a high quality of sound reproduction is achieved in the 16 mm. version.)

The film does in fact do its job of integration superbly, and in so doing brings to the forefront the implied motive behind the visual unit—the development of the aesthetic senses of the children. They can now see what all this study is really about—the creation of beauty and expression of ideas. Here Benjamin Britten achieves a triumph. His fifteen variations and fugue have everything required; charm, melody and, above all, simplicity. And Malcolm Sargent deserves special mention, too, for his introduction of the instruments in terms of unpatronizing homeliness, though it would have been happier if he could have been introduced and his function briefly explained as conductor. *Instruments of the Orchestra* has received commercial distribution and this raises certain questions regarding the Ministry of Education films. In this case it would seem a sensible decision, for the film has much to offer adult audiences and should be popular. However, it would be an undesirable development if classroom films were made with an eye to theatrical distribution, however tempting this might be from a financial point of view.

Return to Work. Merlin Films for C.O.I. in conjunction with the Ministry of Labour. *Producer:* Michael Hankinson. *Director:* Gilbert Gunn. *Photography:* Cyril Bristow. *Story:* Robert Waithman. *Composer:* Norman Fulton. *Musical Direction:* Dr. Hubert Clifford. Distribution: C.F.L. and theatrical. 18 mins.

The purpose of this film is to show how the Ministry of Labour trains disabled men so that they can resume their place in industry. After periods of training at special rehabilitation centres even the most apparently hopeless cases gain sufficient confidence and skill to earn their living in jobs most suited to them.

The subject is an absorbing one but, unfortunately, the presentation leaves much to be desired. The film has at times a most objectionably patronizing tone, particularly when an instructor lectures the disabled men on the necessity for them to cultivate the qualities of conscientiousness and honesty. Casting, too, is careless and, at the cinema where the reviewer saw the film, the audience was convulsed with laughter at the antics and mannerisms of one of the Ministry interviewing officers.

Apart from the photography the film is technically poor. The inordinate use of fades give it the appearance of a succession of isolated episodes; the spectator is constantly reaching for his hat under the mistaken impression that he's had it.

In view of the resistance within the trade to the showing of documentaries in the cinemas, it is to be hoped that both C.O.I. and the producing companies will devote more time, care and skill to their films than is evidenced in this one.

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A City Speaks. Films of Fact for the Manchester Corporation. *Producer:* Paul Rotha. *Associate Director:* Francis Gysin. *Photography:* Harold Young and Cyril Arapoff. *Music:* William Alwyn played by the Halle Orchestra conducted by John Barbirolli. *Maps and Charts:* Isotype Institute. *Distribution:* Not yet announced. 65 mins.

There is a beautiful reel in this film in which Rotha and his team take Wagner and the Valkyries for a ride in a big way. The music is provided by Barbirolli and the Hallé Orchestra. The visuals, cut perfectly to the music, are of Manchester at play—football, dance halls, fun-fair switchbacks, speedway-racing, wrestling and the rest. This sequence has a big punch, and it comes at the right moment—the moment indeed when you are beginning to wonder if you aren't going to be slowly smothered (perhaps not unpleasantly) in Isotypes and civic consciousness. The skill of Rotha and his associate Francis Gysin is indeed notable throughout the film in that the didactic or the tendentious is never allowed to overbalance the human interest for too long.

Faced with the not entirely enviable task of cramming all Manchester into a little over an hour, they have devised a system of cross-sectioning the different aspects—organizational, historical, sociological, personal—in blocks, rather than attempting an impressionistic synthesis. While this method inevitably leads to lengthiness as far as the film's total structure is concerned, it does make for a clear presentation of the basic argument. This argument is that any citizen—as it might be you or me—considering the community in which he lives, must look at it from not one, but a series of points of view; only by doing so can he get a clear understanding of the overall situation and problems at any given moment.

The film is so devised as to be a 70-minuter for Manchester and other interested cities of the Midlands, and, by eliminating the centre reels, a 45-minuter for general circulation. This ingenious approach gets rid of what otherwise might have been a major criticism, that the trend of the film is too parochial. The reels dealing intimately with Manchester's more particular problems can be taken out without destroying the main purpose of the opus, which is to delineate the principles of local government (in big city terms) as a whole.

Photographically it is superb, with credits to Hal Young and Cyril Arapoff. William Alwyn contributes what is quite certainly his best score since *The True Glory*. The editing—quite clearly by Rotha himself—is brilliant, although certain sequences, particularly early in the film, could lose a fair amount of footage.

Apart from the later reels, this film lacks some of the emotional impact of *World of Plenty* and *Land of Promise*. Whether its expositional values make up for this is something which only public reaction can decide. In the meantime one may salute a sincerely made film of major dimensions which breaks no new ground but certainly builds surely on a proven basis.

Cotton Comeback. Data for C.O.I. *Producer:* Jack Holmes. *Director:* Donald Alexander. *Photography:* Suschitsky. *Distribution:* Non-T. C.F.L. 25 mins.

Few directors would envy Donald Alexander the task of presenting a constructive and optimistic picture of Britain's cotton industry. Now that mining is on its way to becoming an efficient and productive enterprise, cotton probably merits the dubious distinction of being our most chaotic, out-moded and unproductive industry. In the words of the recent Working Party Report: 'The time has come when all concerned must make up their minds that they must move towards a major transformation . . . unless they are willing to see the industry drift into a period of prolonged trouble and eventually shrink down to the size of a minor British industry.' This is the challenge that *Cotton Comeback* puts on the screen.

The film centres around a Lancashire working class family of which the father has left the cotton industry after years of unemployment to work in engineering. His two daughters have gone to work in a modern and well-equipped mill and are anxious to persuade him to join them. The young man of one of the daughters shortly to be demobbed, brings the problem of his future career into the family discussion. A Town Meeting on the future of cotton provides the focal point for the thrashing out of these problems.

It is difficult not to compare this film with *The Way We Live*. In both cases one sees a family group grappling with an important social issue. But there the similarity ends. These are real cotton

folk, shrewd and sometimes obstinate, but warm-hearted always. They have a sturdy realism that makes the Plymouth family seem like ghosts. In a film where the naturalness of all the characters is outstanding there is still room for a special mention of the refreshing charm of the mill worker and her boy-friend. (Unlike the sophisticated miss of *The Way We Live* she will assuredly not end up with a feature contract!)

It is difficult to deal with the policy questions touched upon in *Cotton Comeback*, largely because the Working Party Report (to which considerable though cautious reference is made) has not yet been adopted, let alone implemented. In these circumstances one cannot blame the director for having depended a good deal on exhortation. Stress had to be laid on the responsibility of employers and workers alike to join in the solution of the industry's problems, and this means on the one hand the modernization and rationalization of production and on the other the taking up of employment in the mills.

The film struggles manfully with these issues, but it has pitifully little to go on. True, it is pointed out, and even shown, that some enlightened employers are going to great trouble to attract labour, but the key question of wages is neither in fact nor, therefore, in the film, faced up to. (At one point it even appeared that the employers would do anything for the workers except pay them a living wage!) But these are small criticisms of an otherwise interesting, concise and human film, of the type which the average cinemagoer will welcome.

'THIS MODERN AGE' SERIES

Distribution: G.F.D. 20 mins. each film.

No. 3. Tomorrow by Air

Tomorrow by Air is an adequate survey of British Civil Aviation from the pioneers of flight to the jet-research Lancastrian. It contains a wealth of good material—the historical stuff of early aeroplanes is fascinating all by itself—and gives a decent account of current developments. We get a look at all the major civil aircraft types now in service or under construction; we glimpse research and development work in progress; the Anglo-American jet race comes in and so do a lot of other interesting things. Apart from a few bits of mis-timing, a pointless musical score, and a commentator who recites his stuff as if he didn't know what it meant, didn't care what it meant, and would rather be in bed anyway, this ought to be a good film, but unfortunately it fails. It fails because it is not exciting. Its fundamental fault is that it poses no problem; there are no internal tensions; it does nothing to the audience save assure it that all is, and always has been, well with British Civil Aviation.

Now, aviation is full of problems, both technical and social; air pioneering was a difficult, ill-supported, haphazard business; public ownership of airlines is a fine debating point; the fact that flying is still attended by certain risks is present in all our minds today; the problem of technical achievement outstripping social advance gives us all to think—in short the whole subject bristles with fascinating intellectual exercises. But no, instead of something which would arouse discussion, get a reaction from its audience and make people go through the motions of thought, 'This Modern Age' gives us a soothing cup of warm cocoa—the very best cocoa, made with real milk, but not the stuff to jerk the cinema addict up in his seat; not the stuff to set the customers arguing in the aisles, and not the stuff to bring them back next week asking for more.

This is a pity. The 'This Modern Age' series set a high standard with their housing film, and the Unit now have a big chance to lay about them with vigour, vitality and gusto. Let them tilt at a windmill or two, they have excellent lances and a free right hand; let them attack with violence or present some reasoned arguments, let them have a hearty crack at doing something and aiming somewhere. Enough of this over-optimistic 'Pippa passes' business, with skill and craftsmanship in an industrial heaven, and all's right with the world. We know we're good, now let's hear how we might be better.

Actuality is not enough—it's got to be creative handling of actuality, and creation is a shocking, vitalizing, disturbing affair, quite different from warm cocoa.

And there ought to be a legal way of banning the line 'Then came—war! (boom—boom)' from commentaries for the next ten years.

No. 4. Fabrics of the Future

Fabrics of the Future succeeds because it does what *Tomorrow by Air* and *Thoroughbreds for the World* (especially *Thoroughbreds for the World*) fail to do—it poses a problem. In fact it poses a whole row of problems, and so it makes you listen and watch.

Through the Middle Ages, it argues, Britain's prosperity was built on wool, and in our own time the Dominions are big exporters of wool to Britain. A widespread and important economic set-up exists to deal with the world's wool. Now, along come synthetics—textiles made from wood pulp, dead fish, glass or what have you. Where do we go from here? Can the wool trade fight back; ought it to fight back; do we want it to fight back? Can it cope with its internal problems—labour shortage, bad factory conditions and so on? What is it doing to improve its product? The film doesn't supply all the answers, nor should it—it awakens interest in what is evidently a very real problem, and it does so in an honest, workmanlike fashion.

Considering issues 3, 4 and 5 of the 'This Modern Age' series together and in the light of the earlier issues (*Homes for All* and *Scotland Yard*) it is apparent that the Unit still has a good deal to learn about sound-track—what to put on and how to time it with the shots; how to achieve some sort of synthesis so that tracks and visual fuse up into a *film*; and a lot to learn about how the facts which they photograph so well can be made intellectually or emotionally exciting. The public cinema screen in this country is wide open to the 'This Modern Age' series, and the age is full of problems and perplexities for the public cinema audience—put these two facts together and watch them flare up into something fine.

No. 5. Thoroughbreds for the World

Thoroughbreds for the World provides twenty minutes of snob-appeal (Lord Derby, his home, his horses, his trainer, his stud groom), love-of-animals appeal (racehorses from the Godolphin Barb to Airborne, and from foalhood to maturity), appeal to business instincts and patriotism (bloodstock an important British export), appeal to sporting instincts (The Derby and a rapid tour of the world's classic horse-races), no sex-appeal, two or three moments of great beauty (riderless horses in movement), Britain's most meaningless music track to date, and (almost certainly) one yawn from the commentator between sentences.

It is well photographed, not very well directed, and no more than competently cut. My guess is that somebody broke his heart padding it out to two reels, but it is all very picturesque and tranquil to the point of boredom.

No. 6. Palestine

The subject of Palestine and its political problems is for many of us these days an incentive to reach for the bromide, prepared to swear that any piece of film speaking on the subject is going to have its message countered by the next piece. 'This Modern Age' manages to hold back the sedative-craving arm just long enough—and then to say quite simply, 'There are two sides to this question; we will take them one at a time. First, the Jews'. It proceeds to do so. It then does as much for the Arabs. Though one has the impression that less space is devoted to them, the balance struck leaves each side equally deserving, each equally blameworthy. The whole approach is feeling and sincere, with a pleasant quality of restraint which colours both commentary and visuals.

'This Modern Age, No. 6' is another attention-holding production whose qualities—particularly photography—lead one to hope we may soon forget to compare it with earlier products of the same *genre*. It will be interesting to see whether the fretful stridency of the March of Doom catches the ears of world audiences more firmly than the reasoned, warmer tones of this latest film periodical.

No. 7. Coal Crisis

This is by far the best issue of 'This Modern Age' so far. It bears every evidence of careful scripting, and of skilled shooting to the script. It is a difficult and tricky subject which might easily have been spoiled by timid handling; fortunately the editorial approach adopted is both courageous and clear-headed. Points of fact and points of argument are fairly and squarely presented, and as a result the cinema-going public at large has the opportunity to get a clear understanding of the basic long-term issues behind the fuel crisis.

It is gratifying also to note a great improvement on previous issues as regards the sound-track. The commentary is brisk and incisive, and the music is not only appropriate but also sparingly used. Its absence when points of major emphasis are made is extremely effective, and certainly much more so than the usual blare of trumpets beloved of screen journalists.

If 'This Modern Age' can keep up to this standard it will be the best series of its type anywhere.

(*continued p.* 92, *col.* 3)

INSIDE INFORMATION ON NON-THEATRICAL DISTRIBUTION

by a TECHNICIAN

SCARCELY ever does one sit down in a theatre to listen to some sound rushes, or hear a commentator's voice coming out of the monitor room loudspeaker, or see a rough-cut at the C.O.I. theatre, but somebody raises the old query: 'Yes. But how will it come over on 16 mm.?'

The documentary movement is rapidly getting itself all confused over 16 mm. sound. The few people who have bothered to attend non-theatrical shows have generally come away full of blackest despair. And rightly so. They have circulated horrible stories of invisible picture and inaudible sound. They have possibly sworn that something must be done about it. They have perhaps written to the C.O.I. They have almost certainly blamed the unfortunate recordist who shot the track. But for all the good that has resulted they might just as well have stayed at home.

During the war we had to put up with the best that circumstances could provide. It was a pretty poor best, but conditions were certainly difficult. But now I am convinced that it is high time we all adopted a clearer outlook on this most vexed and most important problem.

From the point of view of a technician I should like to air my views on my side of the affair. I feel fairly strongly about it because when an unintelligible sound track accompanies the visuals at a non-theatrical show, it is invariably the sound engineer who gets the blame. And it is generally not his fault.

To begin with, I want to emphasize that, given a fair break, the 16 mm. sound track can be, for all practical purposes, every bit as good as the 35 mm. version. And I shall be only too happy to prove it to anybody.

But before this can happen every stage in the long, tortuous chain of events must be given at least as much care as the standard film gets. The 16 mm. film has to cope with a rather different set of conditions from the standard cinema. These conditions do not necessarily make it more difficult to produce, but it is not fair to project any one of a large batch of doubtful optically reduced prints on a glorified toy of a projector in a room with the acoustics of a public lavatory—and to expect perfect reproduction.

What actually does happen? Let us assume that the studio has done its work perfectly. A first class combined print is delivered to the C.O.I. Nobody has any complaints about the sound. If dialect has been used, it has been used intelligently. If there are music or effects, they do not clash with the spoken work. The track is well modulated, and for once the laboratory has hit on the correct density. Everybody is happy and two hundred prints have got to be on non-theatrical circulation by next Monday fortnight.

Somebody orders some combined fine grain prints to send to the optical reduction people. Does anybody examine these prints? Perhaps two or three labs. will produce their quotas of 16 mm. prints in the specified time. Does anybody examine these prints? The C.O.I.'s own film *Shown by Request* proved conclusively that they don't. They are numbered, filed, canned, indexed, labelled, sorted and dispatched. But I am darned sure that nobody bothers to take a look at each print to see that the lab. has been behaving itself.

And even if they did, is there anybody there who knows what to look for? Does the C.O.I. possess a densitometer? And could anybody read it if they did? Does anybody bother to check with the recordist as to what the print density should be? Or tell him which lab. is to be used so that he can take some precautions himself? Does anybody at the Central Film Library know the difference between a gamma and a gadfly?

I have seen prints on circulation which have been so light that the track is almost invisible; tracks so hopelessly under-exposed or under-developed that they had no hope of being intelligible through sheer distortion. Such prints, we know, should never have left the laboratory. But what laboratory is going to bother to be particular when the customer is not?

But let's be generous again. Suppose a good print does find its way into circulation. What happens then? It will be projected by some overworked projectionist in a village schoolroom. Does he attempt to treat the acoustics of the room? When a recordist has to record dialogue under such conditions he takes with him enough felt or other acoustic material to absorb some of the unwanted reflections from the walls and floor. He cannot make a studio out of it, but he can make the difference between usable sound and useless sound. But the projectionist is not equipped with enough material often to black-out the hall for the feeble light from his projector to reach the screen. He cannot possibly turn the hall into an acoustically perfect theatre for perhaps one show, but at least he could make the attempt.

And what of his projector? Many of the machines now in use can fairly be described as robust and well-made playthings. But as precision machines intended for the education and instruction of thousands who have no other access to the cinema they are a monstrous and iniquitous waste of money.

A 35 mm. projector in a normal cinema is heavily and rigidly constructed. It is not carted from place to place in a lorry. It does its work in a building intended solely for the purpose. In fact, it has every advantage. But even then it has to have regular servicing. Frequent tests are carried out by competent engineers to see that it is always in perfect condition. But the 16 mm. portable is virtually ignored. It is allowed to go until it stops. Then it is sent back for repair. The projectionist is not provided with the elementary equipment for keeping the soundhead in correct focus or proper alignment. No standard test film is issued to him. He does his best under absurd conditions, but there is no real need for these

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conditions to exist at all. We cannot expect all at once to have brand new high class machines issued all round, but there are certain elementary precautions which could be taken to see that the show gets half a chance. But nobody seems to care.

That is what seems to me to be so terribly wrong with the whole business. Nobody cares. They say they do. They give pep talks about the enormous social importance of the shows they organize. They haver about the hundreds of thousands of people who see the light of modern social progress through the medium of the non-theatrical cinema. But they don't seem to have the *nous* to employ a technically efficient department which could give this cinema the chance it deserves. Get the films out in sufficient numbers. See that the copies go to the regions on time. Drag bored people out of the wet into the village hall. Then we've all done our duty. It doesn't matter whether anyone has the faintest idea what the film is all about. The attendance figures look good on paper.

But this is all assuming that the studio has done its work well, and that a good print has managed to filter through. What happens when the studio has filled the track up with impossibly broad dialect, with a music background so heavy that even on standard projection the dialogue is hard to follow? Or when the laboratory has produced an almost black sound track with the track area well out of alignment? What happens? Well, just you wander along to the next C.O.I. show in your nearest village. You'll see the vicar and his wife, three labourers who have come in because the local's out of beer, two couples taking advantage of the darkness, and half a dozen children. That's what we're making films for. I know that when two or three are gathered together . . . and so on. But is it really worth while?

GRAPHICS IN CANADA

by GRAHAM McINNES

Co-ordinator of Graphics Division—National Film Board of Canada

WHILE the spearhead of any educational or informational film project remains the sound film, its value both to sponsor and producer—to say nothing of audience—can be greatly enhanced by its considered correlation with other visual media. This at least is the conclusion we have reached in Canada; and if the fact that the National Film Board is equipped to produce all the visual media, more or less under one roof, has had a bearing on that conclusion, the *need* for well-rounded exposition first showed itself in the field: in the grass roots.

As growing sponsorship by Government departments brought with it a need of guaranteed and specialized distribution, there also arose a demand for a wider and more lasting presentation than was possible through the film alone. The key to the fulfilment of this demand lay with the establishment of a Graphics Division and the setting up of a Liaison Department. Both sections were set up under Grierson's régime, but their function and scope have been greatly enlarged and geared more closely to the film programme by his successor, Ross McLean.

It is now the duty of each member of the Liaison Department to become an expert both on the needs of a group of government departments and on the various visual media which the Film Board can produce. As the Board is partially dependent upon sponsorship for its operating costs, the task of the Liaison Officer takes on at times a poignant urgency. He must maintain the closest contact with his opposite number in agriculture or national health, and with the producers concerned; and the midwife's cares weigh heavily upon his shoulders. On to his desk come all the producer's troubles, yet he does not at any time come between the producer and the sponsor when direct contact is necessary. In a sense, however, he protects both producer and sponsor from arbitrary claims advanced by either side, and is responsible for all the contact work which might otherwise occupy the unit manager.

It is also through him, as often as not, that the various film and non-film producers are brought together with the sponsor round a table and matters of media thrashed out. The Graphics Division of the Board is equipped to produce still pictures, film strips and slides, displays and small exhibitions, wall-sheets, posters, photo-gelatine sheets, maps, charts and certain publications. The task of convincing a sponsor that what he needs is not 'a film' or 'maybe a small paper display', but a considered combination of possibly several media, falls initially to the Liaison Officer. But he in turn is greatly assisted by co-ordination between the various production units. Though this often means committee meetings and memoranda in quintuplicate rather than the careless rapture of *ad hoc* production, it also means that the individual producer, while holding prime allegiance to his own medium, sees the informational programmes and problems of the Board as a whole.

A film producer, in a conference, is just as apt to suggest a filmstrip or a wallsheet as a display producer is likely to suggest a film. Thus we all take in each other's washing and the result is that the sponsor can be assured of his message receiving wide and continual attention, and is, in the long run, more likely to avail himself of the Board's services. There is the further point that, no matter how many media he may wish to use, he is dealing with a single organization and, except during production, often with a single man—the Liaison Officer.

Such an arrangement has naturally led us in the direction of the visual unit, and our first pilot model, produced for classroom use with the advice of the Films Committee of the Canada and Newfoundland Education Association, is now being tested in Canadian schools. The theme is 'The Policeman' and the unit consists of a one-reel sound film, a half-reel silent film, a film strip in colour and four wall-sheets. It has been designed to appeal to schoolchildren between the ages of six and nine and, if successful, will be followed by others.

Another venture, sponsored by the Polymer Corporation—a Crown* company producing synthetic rubber—consists of a film, stills coverage of the processes involved, a travelling display, newsreel coverage, a booklet . . . and a Christmas card. In the past year of consolidation, which has involved a certain amount of shortening sail, we have found that nearly all is grist that comes to the NFB mill. Further, the sponsor finds that, unlike the mills of God, we grind them out pretty fast.

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CORRESPONDENCE

SIR: *Why No Labour Films?* draws attention to an important field of work. Doreen Willis's article poses the problem and I hope that *DNL* will not let it go at that. The next two questions are, 'What is to be done?' and 'Who shall do it?'. If the decisions reached and the actions arising out of them are to be realistic it is necessary to be aware of things as they are at present and the reasons for them. 'It might have been hoped that the advent of a Labour Government would automatically have solved it by opening out new vistas of social film-making . . .' Perhaps that is what a lot of people connected with documentary films thought, but why? Nothing ever happens automatically in human society and there is very little evidence in the history of the Labour Movement to suggest that such a thing would happen. Documentary offers a new technique in education especially suitable for the subjects which concern the Labour Movement, but the Movement has shown little interest in education of any sort within itself, much less in new techniques of education. By 'education' I here mean the education of the people in the history, problems and tasks of the working-class in all its aspects, political, economic, social and cultural.

The very success of such documentaries as *Housing Problems* and *The Londoners* is at present a stumbling block to the use of film by the Government and something of the reason why is hinted at in Doreen Willis's remarks about *The Railwaymen* when she says 'But the idea which remained in our heads long after seeing the film was horror at the low rate of wage being offered. . .' And what about the working conditions, which in the case of the railway workshops are not regulated by the Factory Acts? How much the same could be said of road and sea transport, iron and steel, brick making, building and textiles. Even in the case of the mines, wages and conditions are still a matter of promise rather than performance. There is still a lot to be done before honest films of these industries can show a prospect that can make a practical appeal to the man who has a home to build or a factory to maintain. Until it is, one can expect a certain amount of diffidence on the part of the authorities who should be sponsoring them. All this does suggest that there is room for short discussion films on these subjects if only their natural sponsors, the Labour Movement, could be induced to embark on them.

If the makers of documentaries still regard film as a pulpit in the service of the people they must be prepared to show initiative in making it so and get down to detailed activity in conjunction with the increasing number of groups and individuals in the Labour Movement who are interested. Nor should they forget that there is considerable TU activity within their own industry whose knowledge and experience should be valuable. Any such activity will almost certainly start in London, but London is not England and they will travel faster if they get things moving in other parts of the country as soon as possible.

Regarding films made or making for the AEU, ETU and NUT & GW, are they going to be shown outside their respective unions and, if so, to what extent? It may not be possible to supply separate copies for showing by other unions. In that case will invitations be given to leading members of other unions to be present as guests at every show? Are shows going to be given to Trades Councils? Over and above these questions a specially conducted drive would greatly increase demand for the regular use of film as a recognized form of TU activity. It would then be possible to introduce and build up a demand for the regular making of films for the purpose. Films designed to recruit new members and to stir to activity the great mass of dead membership (the 'card-holders' who are the bane of all the active workers) would be widely welcomed. A couple of short films pointing out the possibility of doing this might be prepared by the pooled resources of the documentary industry with the assistance of the trades unionists within its own ranks.

Not so much attention has been given to the Labour Party or the Co-ops. The latter are the more likely starters. But documentary has to face up to this: it is not a large organization compared with these three (Labour, TU and Co-op) and to cover them all it would have to spread itself thinly and so it must give careful attention to how much ground it can cover and which is the most promising to tackle first. Marked success in any one of these is bound to have a deep influence over the others.

As far as the Labour Movement is concerned, a great deal of the future of documentary is bound up with it and the approach to it must not be by chance and haphazard but must be carefully worked out and as carefully put into practice.

Yours faithfully,

A. E. SCARR

In view of the manner of Mr. Scarr's interesting approach to his problem the Editorial Board feels that members of the documentary movement would wish us to point out that documentary, although by its very nature inevitably interested in matters political in so far as they affect social progress, owes exclusive allegiance to no single political party, be it Conservative, Liberal, Labour or Communist.

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DOCUMENTARY REVIEWS—*continued from p.* 89

Fair Rent. Data for C.O.I. *Producer:* Donald Alexander. *Director:* Mary Beales. *Photography:* Suschitsky. *Distribution:* Non-T. 12 mins.
This film manages to pack a deal of good sense and humanity into one reel. It is the simple story of how a poor Aberdeen couple succeed in frustrating the sharp practices of their landlady, with the assistance of the Rent Tribunal.

One might have expected that the need for compression would force a superficial treatment. In fact the couple emerge as real characters and their attitude to the Tribunal, to the landlady, and to their neighbours is conveyed in its changing, developing and conflicting reality. Most people who see this film (and it is to be hoped that it achieves theatrical distribution) will get a big kick out of the defeat of the landlady. Many, like the neighbours of these Aberdonians, will begin to get ideas themselves, thus making life increasingly difficult for the profiteers in homes.

The Scottish Office is to be congratulated on dealing with this subject, and one would only wish that it had been prepared to make a longer film. It would have been interesting to see the actual procedure at a public session of the Tribunal, and it is a pity the opportunity was missed.

CORRESPONDENCE—*contd.*

SIR: It is seldom one reads a thoroughly jaundiced review in *DNL*, or one which fails utterly to present a constructive assessment of the film in question. In the last issue, however, appeared a review of *The Bridge* that can be best described as querulous and at worst as irresponsible.

Your reviewer, Mr. X, has gone to some trouble to belittle every aspect of this film. We are to believe that it is technically inept, has an impossible commentary poorly spoken, lacks humanity, and (final crushing argument?) dodges the political issues. I do not propose to deal here with these points, for my technical knowledge would not be equal to the task. In any case, in his destructive zeal Mr X has so contradicted himself that in some cases this is not necessary. But I do want to make one point about *The Bridge*.

This film was made to do a job. That job was to show to people here the ordinary folk of Yugoslavia facing up to the problem of reconstructing their country. That implied, too, the conveying of the new spirit and social set-up of the country and the basic political and subjective attitudes of the people to the job in hand. The film could be judged successful if, in giving an honest account of these things, it at the same time made a contribution to international co-operation and increased the sense of responsibility and solidarity of the British people as far as the people of Yugoslavia are concerned.

Judged on this basis the film has already proved itself. I have been present when it has been shown to four very different audiences: to a group of technicians, to the London Scientific Film Society, to Unity Theatre, and to an audience of 300 Birmingham citizens. It is interesting to see how the reactions of these audiences dispose of various aspects of the criticisms of Mr. X. The LSFS membership has pretty high technical standards and is particularly watchful for lack of integrity or false values in films, yet *The Bridge* was extremely well received. Unity Theatre audiences are probably the most politically advanced that can be found, yet the one which viewed *The Bridge* (and the place was packed) did not feel, with Mr. X, that the political point had been neglected. As a matter of fact it was felt that here at last was a clear picture of the way of living of one of the new European democracies which would be of immense value in combating the stories of the yellow press.

However, the reactions of the Birmingham audience are probably the most important, since they were the people for whom the film was really made. Did Mr. X say the film lacked humanity, that there was no warmth in the commentary? I'd like him to have heard the throat clearings at the emotional climax of the film, or the horrified gasp when the commentator drew attention to the fact that Serbia must be very prosperous because the dogs were still alive. At the end there was a long silence—and some surreptitious work with handkerchiefs—then a woman got up and said that she didn't think people would want to discuss the film because it had been too overpowering. A loud murmur of agreement showed that she was expressing a general feeling, but some people did speak, and all stressed how affected they had been and how important it was that they should be able to see such films as *The Bridge* in the cinemas. The Chairman, a member of the Co-op Education Committee, wound up by saying that she thought the film should be shown throughout the Co-operative Movement, and in particular to the Youth Clubs. It would do much to bring home the responsibility we all had to the people of Yugoslavia, and of Europe generally, and to strengthen the friendship between peoples that can make future wars impossible.

'If only the film had achieved a sense of humanity', wails Mr. X. If only Mr. X had achieved a sense of proportion!

Yours, etc.,

VAL WALKER

SIR: Ciné-clubs, to use the French term for film societies, obviously play a large part in non-commercial cinematograph activities, in supplying a critical public with historical and aesthetic documents, in awakening a critical sense in a widening public and, through this influence, in eventually raising the standards of production. The post-war ciné-club movement in France is strong and has a growing public and, perhaps more important for its future development, has a centralized organization in the *Fédération Française des Ciné-clubs* (formed in 1944) and in the resources of the *Cinémathèque*, the official film institute which was already working before the war.

The *Fédération Française des Ciné-clubs* has moral and slight financial support from the Ministry of Education and from the Centre National du Cinéma and this support controls its strictly non-commercial character. An annual general meeting of representatives of the separate ciné-clubs elect an administrative council which, in turn, elects the four directors—the 'Bureau'. Georges Sadoul is now the secretary and the president is Jean Painlevé who is now with UNESCO. The membership is over 100,000 and, of the 100 clubs registered, 95 are actually functioning now. The role of the Federation's office is to supply films asked for by ciné-clubs though in practice the choice is limited by the existing stock of *Cinémathèque* whose offices are in the same building. A journal is planned and desired but barred by financial difficulties; projectionists have been given a special week's training course; a National Congress is planned for June, 1947, and the Comité de Fédération International des Ciné-Clubs hopes to meet in April and represents, among other countries, Belgium, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The individual clubs are constantly growing and are especially strong in Paris. About nine-tenths of their leaders are teachers and Bordeaux has the only woman leader. A few clubs, Tunis, Casablanca and Tours among them, run their own reviews. The variety of clubs is tempting and bewildering—perhaps it is lucky that their programmes have less variety. There are clubs serving different communities and tastes—from that of the railwaymen of Hellemes and the industrial workers of the Renault Works and of Bologne-Billancourt to that of Montmartre (which tries to revive a music hall atmosphere), the University, and the *Club Voyage et Aventure* which specializes in 'open-air films'. *L'Ecran Français* publishes weekly ciné-club programmes and reports special activities.

(*continued p.* 94, *col.* 3)

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NOT GOOD ENOUGH

THE British Film Institute issues a *Monthly Film Bulletin* which is supposedly an authoritative periodical designed to assist all those concerned in the educational, appreciative, and cultural use of the film medium. This bulletin is in fact the only document of its kind published in this country, and one should be able to look to it, not least because of its source of publication, as an authoritative and accurate document.

Following various complaints we have received from readers of the Institute's *Monthly Film Bulletin*, we have asked two separate and unconnected individuals (concerned in the use of films for educational and general non-theatrical purposes) to examine the film reviews in the *Bulletin* over six issues, from July to December, 1946.

As a result, it would appear that there is a great deal wrong with the Institute's system of appraisal and reviewing. There seems to be a lot of confusion over the Institute's much vaunted specialist panels (one would like to have details of how often, and in what numbers, they attend projections) and even greater confusion owing to reviews arbitrarily written by individuals. It is indeed difficult to see what actual reviewing and appraisal system the British Film Institute adopts.

In the interest of film users we give below some critical observations on the *Monthly Film Bulletin*.

We note, for instance, that the films entitled *Flowers*, *Roots*, *Stems*, are dealt with under the classification 'Botany' (p. 104). But *Fruits* (p. 118) is included under 'Science' while *Leaves* and *Pollinations* come under 'Natural History'. All these films, bless you, were reviewed by the Natural History Viewing Committee. All of them, bless you again, are catalogued by the producers, G-B.I. under 'Botany' which seems sensible enough to us. Why, oh why, the confusing cross-references?

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Twenty Years of British Film is a beautifully produced book from the Falcon Press. There are a hundred excellently reproduced stills, many of them being refreshingly new scenes from the old familiar films (the 'stock' still has become something of a menace in the cinema's critical works). Unfortunately, the text scarcely reaches the level of the rest of the book. Michael Balcon, Ernest Lindgren, Forsyth Hardy and Roger Manvell are over-conscious of their weary passage over old ground. Only the last-named attempts something more than unadorned, uninterpreted history. You may not accept his analysis of the special characteristics of the modern British feature film and it may well be over-optimistic to talk about 'a cinematic poetry peculiar to British films'. But many of Manvell's observations on the wide variety of subject-matter and treatment emanating from British studios were well worth making. It may be that we are insufficiently conscious of the flexibility which the medium has found in British hands.

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The documentary or, if you will, the factual film movement is still a living thing and what this valuable work does is to freeze it for a moment so that those who wish may have a look at it. If, in this pose of unaccustomed immobility, it looks at times faintly ridiculous so also does a still shot of Wooderson running or a once lively salmon stuffed on the parlour wall. But if you wish for information about the factual film, here it is. Its subject index ranges from the Aberdeen Film Society to Lady Yule, evidence that its interests are wide, and its film index takes us from one war to another via A.B.C.A. and Zeebrugge. Between its covers you can find information about the factual film in war, in education and in the cinemas. There are sections on the news film and on the international use of film and among the four appendices there is a useful section on the British Film Industry as a whole.

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Apart from this *The Factual Film* is a most useful work and, indeed, one of great value. But no documentary film maker should be allowed to read it. Making history, on whatever scale, and writing about it are two very different things and present day factual films will be none the worse for their makers being unconscious of the fact that one day their titles may appear in the index of a chastely produced book.

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In fact, 16 *Mil. Film User*, in spite of its ghastly name, is a really useful publication with the additional factor (and how important a factor) of making quite good reading.

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(*continued p. 96, col. 2*)

NOT GOOD ENOUGH

THE British Film Institute issues a *Monthly Film Bulletin* which is supposedly an authoritative periodical designed to assist all those concerned in the educational, appreciative, and cultural use of the film medium. This bulletin is in fact the only document of its kind published in this country, and one should be able to look to it, not least because of its source of publication, as an authoritative and accurate document.

Following various complaints we have received from readers of the Institute's *Monthly Film Bulletin*, we have asked two separate and unconnected individuals (concerned in the use of films for educational and general non-theatrical purposes) to examine the film reviews in the *Bulletin* over six issues, from July to December, 1946.

As a result, it would appear that there is a great deal wrong with the Institute's system of appraisal and reviewing. There seems to be a lot of confusion over the Institute's much vaunted specialist panels (one would like to have details of how often, and in what numbers, they attend projections) and even greater confusion owing to reviews arbitrarily written by individuals. It is indeed difficult to see what actual reviewing and appraisal system the British Film Institute adopts.

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(*continued p.* 96, *col.* 2)

THE RECEIVING END

L. Helliwell protests against the inadequate distribution of Documentaries

WHEN, oh! when is more attention going to be paid to the distributive side of documentaries? Much human endeavour, much brilliance and sincerity is put into the making of a film; one would suppose that equal endeavour and sincerity would be employed in getting it to the people who would enjoy and appreciate the effort made. However brilliant a film is, its value lies only in the influence it brings to bear on those who see it—the finest film ever made, unless seen by an audience, is not a film. This surely must be appreciated by the creators, and yet, despite the tepth of thought and wealth of talent employed, interest seems to die at the moment of compledion.

I like documentaries. I live in a city of nearly 300,000 inhabitants, but can I see a representative selection of 'reality' films? No! Occasionally one is included in the cinema programmes but it is never an attraction *per se*, and is only utilized in a haphazard and time-filling capacity. You can almost hear the film magnate's 'If you must have your 2½/3 hours show, you'll have to sit through this', Is all this (to use the *DNL*'s phrase) 'creative interpretation of reality' to remain for ever in such ignominy?

In this city of 300,000 people you can see feature films at the local cinema, or join the city film society to learn film technique and appreciation—both occupations which I heartily enjoy. To a lover of the documentary, however, the latter is like having the after-dinner liqueur without having had the dinner.

I said above I like documentaries. I do more: it is one of my duties to arrange a winter session of documentary and interest films. This is frankly an 'education through interest' movement by aligning films, speakers and books on a theme, together, at the same time. Normally, I use 2, 3 or 4 films of differing subjects but capable of being associated together to develop the theme, the speaker enlarging on the primary aspect, or providing the necessary cohesion between films.

Anyone familiar with the film movement will immediately perceive the difficulty of 'partnering' films for thepurpose in view and the, usually, impossible, task of replacement if the desired film is not available. In this way each winter I use approximately 50 documentary and interest films of lengths between 10 and 40 minutes. You may say—'No easy task!' Indeed, it is not.

Here we reach the whole crux of my problem and, I believe, the testing point of all uses of the documentary. Films are made to earn a profit. With that statement there can be no argument, but are the makers of documentaries satisfied with the method by which this return is obtained; that their creative artistry is casually accepted as a regrettable but necessary obligation; when the whole conditions of showing tend to destroy the inherent value of the film? What can be good in one setting can be wasted in another. Does not a producer of documentaries ever say to himself, 'Is it worth while?' when he sees his work, not thrown away, but failing to get the full reception and appreciation it deserves?

I said above that films are made for profit—and to obtain this profit they must be given the wrong setting. To exhibit them in their most useful surroundings is not an economic proposition. From these two facts there seems to be no divergence.

My programme is not the best way of showing documentaries, but it is better than casual inclusion amongst feature films. I have a strongly appreciative public, but economically speaking, I am much too small fry to receive due consideration from the big film distributors, who, reasonably enough, are little interested in non-theatrical exhibitions, which bring small returns.

There, above, are two aspects of the same problem—a private citizen's inabi!ity to see the films he wishes and an official's difficulty in obtaining the films to exhibit. You may protest at once that the one outrules the other. That is true to a certain extent—but it is incidental.

Briefly stated, that is the situation at present. What of the future? If the documentary film is to have the success it deserves every town and city of appreciable size will have a documentary cinema or club on the lines of the present film societies, but before this desirable end is obtained the distribution of the documentary will have to be simplified.

Now that producers have associated themselves in the Federation of Documentary Film Units, is it not possible to have a similarly centralized distributing agency? This would greatly simplify the work of any club organizer and would be a boon to anyone whose duties are similar to mine.

Regarding the other trouble, the cost of hiring documentaries, is it not possible to have one or two copies of each film kept strictly for non-theatrical shows at considerably reduced fees? The immediate loss of income would be compensated by the wider distribution and the satisfaction of getting the film to the public it deserves and the public who welcome it. This suggestion will be viewed with scandalized amazement by film magnates, but the fact remains that documentary is still fighting for its merited appreciation, and will continue to do so whilst its energies are dissipated in the casual bookings of today.

CORRESPONDENCE—*continued from p. 95*

Russian-trained dancers. This, combined with the minimal use of dialogue to which *Marg's* reviewer refers, makes *Kalpana* a film which could profitably be brought within the experience of the West. London exhibitors, and film societies are beginning to grow out of the idea that 'foreign' films must be Hollywood, French, or German, and are screening the productions of other countries. If London could support a Russian season of more than four years at the Tatler, and can keep the first Danish talkie we have ever seen running for months at the Academy, it is surely not too venturesome to suggest that *Kalpana* might enjoy a short season here? Indian films must someday be screened, for enjoyment and criticism, in London, and, if eventually why not now? This seems from its advance publicity to be as good a film as any, and better than most, to start with.

Yours, etc.,

F. J. BROWN

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